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INQUIRY

INTO THE

EFFECTS

OF

SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS

UPON THE

HUMAN BODY,

And their Influence upon the Happineſs of Society.

By BENJAMIN RUSH, M. D.
PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF PHILADELPHIA.

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The following ſhort Treatiſe, although originally publiſhed with a view of correcting American manners, yet is unfortunately ſo applicable to thoſe now prevalent in our own country, as to make the re-publication of it here appear a matter of propriety.——The Editor has reaſon to believe, that the opinions of our moſt eminent phyſicians entirely concur with thoſe of the worthy Author of theſe pages: And although many of the obſervations are particularly applicable to the climate and inhabitants of America, yet the general tendency of the whole applies with equal force to the inhabitants under every climate: And it is unneceſſary to ſtate, of what conſequence it would prove to ſociety, were it poſſible to give an effectual check to practices ſo pernicious as are thoſe ſought to be decried in this performance.

EFFECTS

OF

SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS

UPON THE

HUMAN BODY, &c.

By ſpirits I mean all thoſe liquors which are obtained by diſtillation from fermented juices, or ſubſtances of any kind. Theſe liquors were formerly uſed only in medicine. They now conſtitute a principal part of the drinks of many countries.

Since the introduction of ſpirituous liquors into ſuch general uſe, phyſicians have remarked, that a number of new diſeaſes have appeared among us, and have deſcribed many new ſymptoms as common to old diſeaſes. Spirits, in their firſt operation, are ſtimulating upon the ſyſtem. They quicken the circulation of the blood, and produce ſome heat in the body: ſoon afterwards, they become what is called ſedative; that is, they diminiſh the action of the vital powers, and thereby produce languor and weakneſs.

The effects of ſpirituous liquors upon the human body, in producing diſeaſes, are ſometimes gradual. A ſtrong conſtitution, eſpecially if it be aſſiſted with conſtant and hard labour, will counteract the deſtructive effects of ſpirits for many years; but in general they produce the following diſeaſes:

1. A ſickneſs at the ſtomach, and vomiting in the morning. This diſorder is generally accompanied with a want of appetite for breakfaſt. It is known by tremors in the hands, in ſo much that perſons who labour under it are hardly able to lift a tea-cup to their heads

till they have taken a doſe of ſome cordial liquor. In this diſorder, a peculiar paleneſs, with ſmall red ſtreaks, appear in the cheeks. The fleſh of the face at the ſame time has a peculiar fulneſs and flabbineſs, which are very different from ſound and healthy fat.

2. An univerſal dropſy. This diſorder begins firſt in the lower limbs, and gradually extends itſelf throughout the whole body. I have been told, that the merchants in Charles-town, in South-Carolina, never truſt the planters, when ſpirits have produced the firſt ſymptom of this ſecond diſorder upon them. It is very natural to ſuppoſe, that induſtry and virtue have become extinct in that man, whoſe legs and feet are ſwelled, from the uſe of ſpirituous liquors.

3. Obſtruction of the liver. This diſorder produces other diſeaſes; ſuch as an inflammation, which ſometimes proves ſuddenly fatal; the jaundice; and a dropſy of the belly.

4. Madneſs. It is unneceſſary to deſcribe this diſeaſe, with all its terrors and conſequences. It is well known in every place where ſpirituous liquors are indiſcreetly uſed.

5. The Palſy, and 6. The Apoplexy, complete the group of diſeaſes produced by ſpirituous liquors. I do not aſſert that theſe two diſorders are never produced by any other cauſes, but I maintain that ſpirituous liquors are the moſt frequent cauſes of them; and that when a predispoſition to them is produced by other cauſes, they are rendered more certain, and more dangerous, by the intemperate uſe of ſpirits.

I have only named a few of the principal diſorders produced by ſpirituous liquors. It would take up a volume to deſcribe how much other diſorders, natural to the human body, are increaſed and complicated by them. Every ſpecies of inflammatory and putrid fever is rendered more frequent, and more obſtinate, by the uſe of ſpirituous liquors.

The danger to life from the diſeaſes which have been mentioned, is well known. I do not think it extravagant, therefore, to repeat here what has been often ſaid, that ſpirituous liquors deſtroy more lives than the ſword.

War has its intervals of deſtruction; but ſpirits operate at all times and ſeaſons upon human life. The ravages of war are confined to but one part of the human ſpecies, *viz.* to men; but ſpirits act too often upon perſons who are exempted from the dangers of war by age or ſex. And laſtly, war deſtroys only thoſe perſons who allow the uſe of arms to be lawful, whereas ſpirits inſinuate their fatal effects among people whoſe principles are oppoſed to the effuſion of human blood.

Let us next turn our eyes from the effects of ſpirits upon health and life, to their effects upon *property;* and here freſh ſcenes of miſery open to our view. Among the inhabitants of cities, they produce debts, diſgrace, and bankruptcy. Among farmers, they produce idleneſs, with its uſual conſequences; ſuch as houſes without windows, barns without roofs, gardens without incloſures, fields without fences, meager cattle, feeble horſes, and half-clad dirty children, without principles, morals, or manners. This picture is not exaggerated. I appeal to the obſervations of every man, whether ſuch ſcenes of wretchedneſs do not follow the tracks of ſpirituous liquors in every part of the ſtate.

If we advance one ſtep further, and examine the effects of ſpirituous liquors upon the *moral faculty*, the proſpect will be ſtill more diſtreſſing and terrible. The firſt effects of ſpirits upon the mind, ſhew themſelves in the *temper*. I have conſtantly obſerved men who are intoxicated in any degree with ſpirits, to be peeviſh and quarrelſome; after a while they loſe by degrees the moral ſenſe. They violate promiſes and engagements without ſhame or remorſe. From theſe deficiences in veracity and integrity, they paſs on to crimes more heinous. It would be to diſhonour human nature only to name them.

Thus have I, in a few words, pointed out the effects of ſpirituous liquors upon the lives, eſtates, and ſouls of my fellow-creatures.——Their miſchiefs may be ſummed up in a few words. They fill our church-yards with premature graves; they fill the Sheriff's docket with executions; they croud our jails; and laſtly, they

people the regions——but it belongs to another profeſſion to ſhew their terrible conſequences in the future world.

I ſhall now proceed to combat ſome prejudices in favour of the uſe of ſpirituous liquors.

There are *three* occaſions in which ſpirits have been thought to be neceſſary and uſeful:

1. In very cold weather:
2. In very warm weather: and,
3. In times of hard labour.

1. There cannot be a greater error than to ſuppoſe that ſpirituous liquors leſſen the effects of cold upon the body. On the contrary, I maintain, that they always render the body more liable to be affected and injured by cold. The temporary warmth they produce is always ſucceeded by chilline ſs. If any thing beſides warm clothing and exerciſe is neceſſary to warm the body in cold weather, a plentiful meal of wholeſome food is at all times ſufficient for that purpoſe. This, by giving a tone to the ſtomach, invigorates the whole ſyſtem, while the gentle fever, created by digeſtion, adds conſiderably to the natural and ordinary heat of the body, and thus renders it leſs ſenſible of the cold.

2. It is equally abſurd to ſuppoſe that ſpirituous liquors leſſen the effects of heat upon the body. So far from it, they rather increaſe them. They add an internal heat to the external heat of the ſun; they diſpoſe to fevers and inflammations of the moſt dangerous kind; they produce preternatural ſweats, which weaken, inſtead of a uniform and gentle perſpiration, which exhilarates the body. Half the diſeaſes which are ſaid to be produced by warm weather, I am perſuaded, are produced by the ſpirits which are ſwallowed to leſſen its effects upon the ſyſtem.

3. I maintain, with equal confidence, that ſpirituous liquors do not leſſen the effects of hard labour upon the body. Look at the horſe, with every muſcle of his body ſwelled from morning till night, in the plough or the team, does he make ſigns for ſpirits to enable him to cleave the earth, or to climb a hill? No: he requires nothing but cool water, and ſubſtantial food.

There is neither ſtrength nor nouriſhment in ſpirituous liquors. If they produce vigour in labour, it is of a tranſient nature, and is always ſucceeded with a ſenſe of weakneſs and fatigue. Theſe facts are founded in obſervation; for I have repeatedly ſeen thoſe men perform the greateſt exploits in work, both as to degree and duration, who never taſted ſpirituous liquors.

But are there no conditions of the human body in which ſpirituous liquors are required? Yes, there are: 1ſt, In thoſe caſes where the body has been exhauſted by any cauſes, and faintneſs, or a ſtoppage in the circulation of the blood has been produced, the ſudden ſtimulus of ſpirits may be neceſſary. In this caſe we comply ſtrictly with the advice of Solomon, who confines the uſe of "ſtrong drink" only to him "that is ready to periſh." And 2dly, When the body has been long expoſed to wet weather, and more eſpecially if cold be joined with it, a moderate quantity of ſpirits is not only proper, but highly uſeful, to obviate debility, and thus to prevent a fever. I take theſe to be the only two caſes that can occur, in which ſpirituous liquors are innocent or neceſſary.

But if we reject ſpirits from being part of our drinks, what liquors ſhall we ſubſtitute in the room of them? For cuſtom, the experience of all ages and countries, and even nature herſelf, all ſeem to demand drinks more grateful and more cordial than ſimple water.

To this I ſhall reply, by recommending in the room of ſpirits, in the firſt place,

1. CYDER. This excellent liquor contains a ſmall quantity of ſpirit, but ſo diluted and blunted, by being combined with an acid and a large quantity of ſaccharine matter and water, as to be perfectly inoffenſive and wholeſome. It diſagrees only with perſons ſubject to the rheumatiſm; but it may be rendered inoffenſive to ſuch people, by extinguiſhing a red-hot iron in it, or by diluting it with water. It is to be lamented that the late froſts in the ſpring often deprive us of the fruit which affords this liquor. But the effects of theſe froſts have been in ſome meaſure obviated, by giving an orchard a north-weſt expoſure, ſo as to check too early

vegetation; and by kindling two or three large fires of bruſh and ſtraw to windward of the orchard, the evening before we expect a night of froſt. This laſt expedient has, in many inſtances, within the compaſs of my knowledge, preſerved the fruit of an orchard, to the great joy and emolument of the ingenious huſbandman.

2. BEER is a wholeſome liquor compared with ſpirits. The grain from which it is obtained is not liable, like the apple, to be affected with froſt, and therefore it can always be procured at a moderate expence. It abounds with nouriſhment. Hence we find many of the common people in Great-Britain endure hard labour, with no other food than a quart or three pints of this liquor, with a few pounds of bread a-day. I have heard with great pleaſure of breweries being ſet up in ſeveral of the principal county-towns of Penſylvania; and I eſteem it a ſign of the progreſs of our ſtate in wealth and happineſs, that a ſingle brewer, in a neighbouring county, ſold above one thouſand barrels of beer laſt year. While I wiſh to ſee a law impoſing the heavieſt taxes on whiſky-diſtilleries, I ſhould be glad to ſee breweries (at leaſt for ſome years) wholly exempted from taxation.

3. WINE is likewiſe a wholeſome liquor compared with ſpirits. The low wines of France, I believe, could be drunk at a leſs expence than ſpirits in this country. The peaſants in France, who drink theſe liquors in large quantities, are a healthy and ſober body of people. Wines, of all kinds, yield, by chemical analyſis, the ſame principles as cyder, but in different proportions; hence they are both cordial and nouriſhing. It is remarked that few men ever become *habitual* drunkards upon wine. It derives its reliſh principally from company; and is ſeldom, like ſpirituous liquors, drunk in a chimney-corner, or in a cloſet. The effects of wine upon the *temper* are likewiſe, in moſt caſes, directly oppoſite to thoſe that were mentioned of ſpirituous liquors. It muſt be a bad heart indeed that is not rendered more cheerful, and more generous, by a few glaſſes of wine.

4. VINEGAR and WATER, ſweetened with ſugar, or molaſſes, is the beſt drink that can be contrived in warm

weather. I beg leave to recommend this wholeſome mixture to reapers in a particular manner. It is pleaſant and cooling. It promotes perſpiration, and reſiſts putrefaction. Vinegar and water conſtituted the only drink of the ſoldiers of the Roman republic; and it is well known, that they marched and fought in a warm climate, and beneath a load of arms that weighed ſixty pounds. Boaz, a wealthy farmer in Paleſtine, we find, treated his reapers with nothing but bread dipped in vinegar. Say not, that ſpirits have become neceſſary in harveſt, from habit, and the cuſtom of the country. The cuſtom of ſwallowing this liquid fire is a bad one, and the habit of it may be broken. Let half a dozen farmers in a neighbourhood combine to allow higher wages to their reapers than are common, and a ſufficient quantity of *any* of the liquors I have recommended, and they may ſoon aboliſh the practice of giving them ſpirits. They will in a little while be delighted with the good effects of their aſſociation. Their grain will be ſooner and more carefully gathered into their barns, and an hundred diſagreeable ſcenes of ſickneſs and contention will be avoided, which always follow, in a greater or leſs degree, the uſe of ſpirituous liquors. Under this head, I ſhould not neglect to recommend butter-milk and water, or ſour milk (commonly called Bonne-clabber) and water. It will be rendered more grateful by the addition of a little ſugar.

PUNCH is likewiſe calculated to leſſen the effects of heat, and hard labour, upon the body. The ſpirit in this liquor is blunted by its union with the vegetable acid. Hence it poſſeſſes not only the conſtituent parts, but moſt of the qualities of cyder and wine. To render this liquor perfectly innocent and wholeſome, it muſt be drunk *weak*, in *moderate* quantities, and *only* in warm weather.

There are certain claſſes of people to whom I beg leave to ſuggeſt a caution or two upon the uſe of ſpirituous liquors

1. Valetudinarians, eſpecially thoſe who labour under diſorders of the ſtomach and bowels, are very apt to fly to ſpirits for relief. Let ſuch people be cautious how

they repeat this dangerous remedy. I have known many men and women, of excellent characters and principles, who have been betrayed, by occaſional doſes of gin or brandy, to eaſe the cholic, into a love of ſpirituous liquors, in ſo much that they have afterwards fallen ſacrifices to their fatal effects. The different preparations of opium are a thouſand times more ſafe and innocent than ſpirituous liquors, in all ſpaſmodic affections of the ſtomach and bowels. So apprehenſive am I of the danger of contracting a love for ſpirituous liquors, by accuſtoming the ſtomach to their ſtimulus, that I think the fewer medicines we exhibit in ſpirituous vehicles the better.

2. Some people, from living in countries ſubject to the intermitting fever, endeavour to fortify themſelves againſt it, by two or three glaſſes of bitters made with ſpirits every day.—There is great danger of men becoming ſots from this practice. Beſides, this mode of preventing intermittents is by no means a certain one. A much better ſecurity againſt them is to be found in the Jeſuits bark. A tea-ſpoonful of this excellent medicine, taken every morning during the ſickly ſeaſon, has, in many inſtances, preſerved whole families, in the neighbourhood of rivers and mill-ponds, from fevers of all kinds. Thoſe who live in a ſickly part of the country, and who cannot procure the bark, or who object to taking it, I would adviſe to avoid the morning and evening air in the ſickly months; to kindle fires in their houſes on damp days, and in cool evenings, throughout the whole ſummer; and to put on woollen clothing about the firſt week in September. The laſt part of this direction applies only to the inhabitants of the middle ſtates. Theſe cautions, I am perſuaded, will be more effectual in preventing autumnal fevers, than the beſt preparations that can be made from bitters in ſpirits.

3. Men who follow profeſſions that require a conſtant exerciſe of the mind or body, or perhaps of both, are very apt to ſeek relief from fatigue in ſpirituous liquors. To ſuch perſons I would beg leave to recommend the uſe of TEA inſtead of ſpirits. Fatigue is occaſioned by the obſtruction of perſpiration. Tea, by reſtoring perſpiration, removes fatigue, and thus invigorates the ſyſ-

tem. I am no advocate for the general or exceſſive uſe of tea.—When drunk too ſtrong it is hurtful, eſpecially to the female conſtitution; but when drunk of a moderate degree of ſtrength, and in moderate quantities, with ſugar, and cream or milk, I believe it is in general innocent, and at all times to be perferred to ſpirituous liquors. One of the moſt induſtrious ſchoolmaſters I ever knew, told me that he had been preſerved from the love of ſpirituous liquors by contracting a love for tea in early life. Three or four diſhes drunk in an afternoon, carried off the fatigue of a whole day's labour in his ſchool. This gentleman lived to be ſeventy-one years of age; and afterwards died of an acute diſeaſe, in the full exerciſe of all the faculties of his mind.

To every claſs of my readers, I beg leave to ſuggeſt a caution againſt the uſe of TODDY. I acknowledge that I have known ſome men, who, by limiting its ſtrength conſtantly, by meaſuring the ſpirit and water, and who by drinking it *only* with their *meals*, have drunk toddy for many years, without ſuffering in any degree from it: but I have known many more, who have been inſenſibly led, from drinking toddy for their conſtant drink, to take drams in the morning, and have afterwards paid their lives as the price of their folly. I ſhall ſelect one caſe from among many that have come within the compaſs of my knowledge, to ſhew the ordinary progreſs of intemperance in the uſe of ſpirituous liquors. A gentleman, once of a fair and ſober character, for many years drank toddy as his conſtant drink. From this he proceeded to drink grog: after a while nothing would ſatisfy him but ſlings, made of equal parts of rum and water, with a little ſugar. From ſlings he advanced to raw rum, and from common rum to Jamaica ſpirits. Here he reſted for a few months: but at laſt he found even Jamaica ſpirits were not ſtrong enough to warm his ſtomach; and he made it a conſtant practice to throw a table-ſpoonful of ground pepper into each glaſs of ſpirits, in order (to uſe his own expreſſion) "to take off their coldneſs." It is hardly neceſſary to add, that he ſoon afterwards died a martyr to his intemperance.

I ſhall conclude what has been ſaid of the effects of ſpirituous liquors with two obſervations. 1. A people corrupted by ſtrong drink cannot long be a *free* people. The rulers of ſuch a community will ſoon partake of the vices of that maſs from which they are ſecreted, and all our laws and governments will ſooner or later bear the ſame marks of the effects of ſpirituous liquors which were deſcribed formerly upon individuals. I ſubmit it therefore to the conſideration of the legiſlature, whether more laws ſhould not be made to increaſe the expence, and leſſen the conſumption of ſpirituous liquors; and whether ſome mark of public infamy ſhould not be inflicted by law upon every man convicted before a common magiſtrate of drunkenneſs.

If the facts that have been ſtated, have produced in any of my readers, who have ſuffered from the uſe of ſpirituous liquors, a reſolution to abſtain from them hereafter, I muſt beg leave to inform them, that they muſt leave them off *ſuddenly* and *entirely*. No man was ever *gradually* reformed from drinking ſpirits. He muſt not only avoid taſting, but even ſmelling them, until long habits of abſtinence have ſubdued his affection for them. To prevent his feeling any inconveniencies for the ſudden loſs of their ſtimulus upon his ſtomach, he ſhould drink plentifully of camomile, or of any other bitter tea, or a few glaſſes of ſound old wine every day. I have great pleaſure in adding, that I have ſeen a number of people, who have been *effectually* reſtored to health, to character, and to uſefulneſs to their families and ſociety, by following this advice.

THE END.

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